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ABSTRACT

Discussed are ways to meet the needs of the individual preschool child within the child care center. Ways in which each child is unique are given to include type of personality rate of development, attitude toward the world, and coping method. Discussed are causes of individual differences including heredity and environment, prenatal and postnatal experiences, nutrition, illness, family relationships, economic status, and type of home environment. Teachers are encouraged to start noticing individual differences the first day the child comes to the center. Also considered are individual differences in needs of children such as the child who fears separation from his mother, the child who enjoys every center activity, or the child who views the center as an arena of competition. Development of a positive self image is seen to be an important function of the child care center. Groups of children are also seen to differ, and it is recommended that each child be encouraged to contribute to the group. (DB)

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caring for children — number seven

THE INDIVIDUAL CHILD

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LOIS B. MURPHY, Ph.D.
ETHEL M. LEEPER

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preface

The influence of a good child care center is not limited to the children who are cared for, the staff itself, or the mothers who participate. Older and younger brothers and sisters, friends, neighbors, volunteers may all gain from changes brought about by the child care center. In some instances, the neighborhood is brightened up, inspired by the attractiveness of the center, and pride emerges to spark new efforts. School teachers and principals, ministers, and local agencies also grow more helpful, more interested in children.

This comes from the friendliness of the center staff to the whole family and to the neighbors. It also comes from the quality of every aspect of the child care center—the cheerful setting, the good food, the well-organized space for activity, the children's progress in learning and self-control, the experience of helping to improve the center itself and the neighborhood, the resulting good feelings, and a contagious sense of progress.

At one child care center on a dirt road full of deep ruts and holes, with some adjacent yards full of junk and neighboring houses in a run down condition, major changes occurred. The city street department improved the road; the real estate agent repaired and painted nearby houses while resident owners painted their own; and volunteers from the police department cleaned up the junk. Yards bare and full of scraggly weeds were seeded and made neat. It all takes effort, but the response releases new energy.

Thus child care centers have the opportunity of providing massive help for the nation's children through contributing to wholesome physical, mental, and social development, and also to an improved environment for the children. The child in a good center all day will receive good food, exercise, and rest to build a healthy body, as well as assistance in correction of physical problems.

Through constant communication with teachers and aides, language is developed, vocabulary is enlarged naturally, thought is stimulated, and a healthy self-concept evolves. Use of toys and other play and work materials involves exercise and development of sensory motor skills, along with many concepts of color, size, shape, weight, balance, structure, and design. Stories and songs encourage integration of feelings, action, and ideas, while developing imagination.

Spontaneous play in the housekeeping corner or with blocks allows the child to play out his observations of the family and the community. Other children may broaden their ideas and skills through watching and joining in the play.

Neither health, nor adequate mental development, nor constructive social behavior can be guaranteed for the rest of the child's life if the following years do not also meet his needs adequately. But good total development in childhood can provide prerequisites for further growth and can help to prevent the beginnings of retardation, disorganized behavior, early delinquency, and emotional disturbance.

acknowledgments

I owe most to two groups of workers with young children: first, my former colleagues at Sarah Lawrence College, who taught the children at the Sarah Lawrence Nursery School—Evelyn Beyer, long time director of the nursery school, and Marian Gay, Rebekah Shuey, and also colleagues at Bank Street College for Teachers with whom at different times I shared teaching and research experiences. But in addition, I owe much to the directors and teachers of many nursery schools and day care centers across America and around the world. Especially exciting to me were the Basic Education schools of India, initiated by Gandhi and Zakir Hussain; and Bal Ghar in Ahmedabad, India—a unique integration of the best American nursery school concepts, Montessori principles, Basic Education, and some traditional Indian patterns, organized with a special balance of good structure and flexibility that I came to know as Kamalini Sarabhai's genius.

I am equally grateful to the creative staff of the North Topeka Day Care Center—Josephine Nesbitt and Forestine Lewis, who "dreamed up" the center to meet the needs of deprived children in their area; and among the intercultural group of teachers and directors, Sarita Peters, Mary Wilson, Jane Kemp, Connie Garcia, Chris Smith —each of whom had special talents in handling the children, stimulating and supporting their growth. Cecile Anderson has been especially generous in sharing her unique story—techniques, observations of children's favorite stories, and ways of looking at children's constructiveness and pride in achievement. Among the volunteers, Lillian Morrow was an inspiration to all of us with her sensitive, skillful, and quietly warm ways, and Carol Rousey contributed expert and helpful assessments of the children's speech and language development.

The leadership of the local OEO director, Robert Harder, and later J. A. Dickinson, stimulated staff, parents and neighbors, Girl Scouts, occupational therapy groups in local hospitals to help paint, plant shrubbery, build outdoor play equipment, provide toys so as to make possible a pleasant and well-furnished environment for learning and for total development. Shirley Norris, director of Kansas State Day Care, Anna Ransom, wise dean of Topeka day care efforts, and Mr. S. Revely, the local realtor who renovated the neighborhood houses for the Center, all gave time, energy, and warm interest to the development of the Center.

I also want to express my appreciation to the responsive mothers whose progress along with that of their children gave me a new understanding of human potentialities in children and adults of all ethnic groups in America and the urgency of making it possible for these to be expressed.

These guidelines were initiated by Dr. Caroline Chandler, former Chief, Children's Mental Health Section, National Institute of Mental Health, and were supported by PHS Grant R12-MH9266, the Menninger Foundation, and Children's Hospital of the District of Columbia. They were prepared under the supervision of Mrs. Franc Balzer, former Director of Head Start's Parent and Child Center Program.

Lois B. Murphy, Ph.D.

THE INDIVIDUAL CHILD

The watcher: some children like to learn by observing.

Monday's child is fair of face,
Tuesday's child is full of grace,
Wednesday's child is full of woe,
Thursday's child has far to go,
Friday's child is loving and giving,
Saturday's child works hard for a living,
But the child who is born on the
Sabbath day
Is bonnie and bright and good and gay.

Nobody seriously believes that the day on which a baby is born has anything to do with what kind of person he is. But what the nursery rhyme does make clear is that every child is different—in appearance, temperament, abilities, and attitudes. Each child is one of a kind. All the characteristics a child inherits from his parents, plus all of his experiences, combine to produce an individual who is different from every other individual who has ever lived or ever will live. Each one of us is unique.

Even identical twins, who developed from the same egg and sperm and therefore share the same inherited traits, are not exactly alike. Though they look alike, their fingerprints are different, the vibrations of their voices may be different, and their experiences are different. Anyone who is closely acquainted with a pair of identical twins soon learns to tell them apart by their mannerisms if not their looks.

Any mother with more than one child knows that from birth a younger child may be completely different from his older brother or sister. One may be fussy; the other happy. One may be hungry all the time; the other uninterested in food. One may wake for an early morning feeding for several months; the other may sleep through the night while only a few weeks old. One may enjoy being alone in his play pen; the other seems happy only when someone holds him. In a healthy family these individual differences are usually handled quite easily.

Children may develop different tastes and reactions to food as well. A mother usually takes this into account and is able to make al-

When coordination is insecure a cautious child will balance carefully.

lowances. If eggs for breakfast give Tom a tummy ache, Mother will probably give him a bowl of cereal when the rest of the family has eggs.

It is fairly simple to adjust to the individual needs within a family. However, in a child care center, any one teacher has more children to look after than most mothers do. Learning what each child's individual needs are and then making allowances for them is more difficult.

Each child comes to the teacher as a little stranger. It takes some time to learn that Tina is affectionate, Jenny is stubborn, Carlos is reckless, Tony is shy, Charlene is a bully, and Kenny is a slow starter who needs help to get moving. If teacher watches closely and remembers how each child behaves in various situations, she eventually will get to know each child as an individual with his own outlook and his own needs. If she tries to adapt activities to meet these needs, she will be giving her children the kind of experiences they need to grow into well-adjusted, responsible adults.

each child is unique

Types of Personalities—When the children arrived at the child care center on Monday morning, the play yard looked very different from the way it had looked on Friday afternoon. Members of a local civic association had been busy all weekend building and installing new equipment. There was a brightly painted wooden sandbox, a chain of rubber tires roped together for climbing, a new teeter totter, and, most exciting of all—a hill of white sand waiting to be put into the sandbox. The sand had been delivered before the paint on the sandbox was dry, and the delivery man had dumped it on the ground so it would not mar the paint.

The new and unexpected setting in the play yard prompted many different responses. Adrian began to "case the joint." He let out a whoop and ran from one thing to another—stamping around in the empty sandbox, poking his head through the tires, scooping up sand in his hands, giving the teeter totter a push. He wanted to do everything at once.

Georgine stood off at a distance and looked from one new piece of equipment to the other. She preferred to stop, look, and listen for a while before jumping in.

Christina ignored the equipment and headed straight for the sand pile. She plunked herself down in the middle of it and began filling her skirt with sand. The sand absorbed her so that she paid little attention to anything else.

Kenny showed his excitement by immediately yanking Adrian off the tire chain so he could climb up himself. His "let-me-at-'em" personality responded aggressively to a new situation. Sonja, meanwhile, was content to point to the bright colors and squeal, "Pretty! Pretty!"

When teacher suggested that all the children take buckets and shovels and begin carrying the sand over to the sandbox, reactions again were different. Georgine and Sonja accepted teacher's suggestion and became willing helpers. Adrian turned his energy toward directing operations and loudly told the other children how much sand to put in their buckets and which corner of the sandbox to fill. Christina continued to play in the sand enjoying the gritty feel on her hands and showing no interest in the carrying project. Kenny, getting no attention, hopped on a bicycle and rode back and forth through the sand, spreading it around the yard, frightening Christina, and receiving the attention he craved in a scolding from teacher.

Adrian and Georgine are opposites that in the animal kingdom might be characterized by the beaver and the chameleon.* The beaver finds a brook and sets about building a dam. He is willing to change his environment to suit his needs. Adrian not only accepted the fact that the sand had to be carried, but turned the project into an activity that he could lead.

A chameleon, on the other hand, changes himself to fit his environment. If he sits on a green leaf, he becomes green. If he moves to a brown branch, he turns brown. Georgine, like the chameleon, was content to fade into the background, first watching silently, then doing what

* Eugene Lerner described these types in L. B. Murphy, **Personality in Young Children,** Vol. I, Basic Books, New York, 1956.

everyone else was doing without attracting attention. This type child who conforms so easily is likely to display a totally different personality in a different setting. She takes her cue from the people around her and behaves accordingly.

Of course, there are many other types of personalities in any child care center. Every center has a few bold ones who jump right in before they look, just as it has some timid "wouldn't-hurt-a-flea" types who avoid vigorous play and sometimes even physical contact with another child. Hopefully, every group will have at least one "idea man" who keeps things rolling by thinking up new games, just as every group will have several cooperative followers who go along with the action, whatever it is. While the follower may be a joy to his teacher because he causes little disturbance, the teacher with an imaginative idea man does not have to plan and initiate so many activities.

There are thin-skinned children whose feelings are easily hurt and thick-skinned children who are able to shake off teasing or scolding. There are the artistic ones who love to paint or listen to music and the athletes who are restless unless they are moving about. One child will snatch whatever he wants from whomever has it; another child will wait patiently until a toy is offered to him.

Several personality traits may be seen in one child. The sensitive, thin-skinned child also may be artistic. The bully surprisingly may turn out to be the group cry baby when someone turns the tables and attacks him.

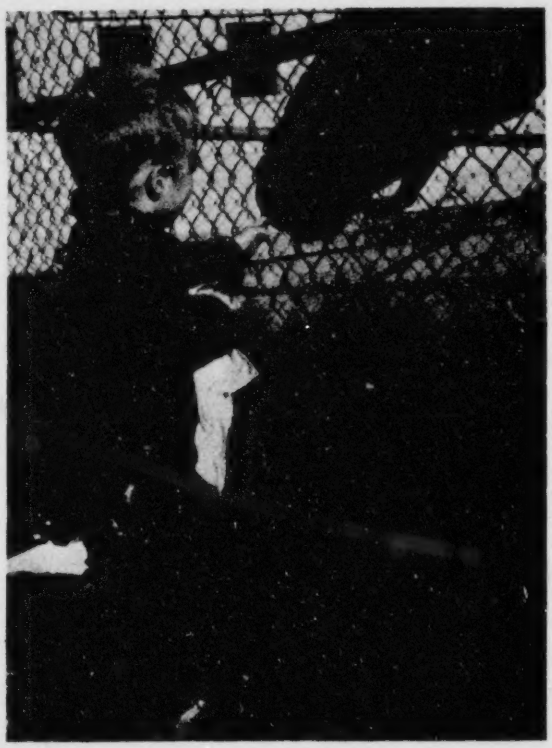
Many of these personality tendencies will stay with a child throughout his life, but the child care center can help each child to become better able to handle his world. It is doubtful that Georgine will grow into a dynamic adult leader, but if she receives encouragement in her early years to act on her own initiative, and praise when she does, she may develop enough self-assurance to rely on her own judgment in reaching adult decisions. With help, Kenny may learn to direct his energy to more constructive activities; Christina may discover that the world offers many interesting pursuits; and Adrian may be able to combine his natural leadership qualities with a wiser approach to the unknown.

Rate of Development—Following a bright older sister or brother through school is a rugged road for an average youngster. Jerry's first grade teacher greeted him with the words, "Oh, you're Patricia's brother. She was my best student. Always got A's. I hope you are as smart."

Poor Jerry! He has an obstacle in front of him before he gets started. His teacher expects him to do as well as his sister did and has already told him he must match her standards.

The teacher, by her thoughtless statements, displayed a lack of knowledge about child development that many people share. She took for granted that two children from the same family have equal abilities. Any mother of two children knows better. While mother may have been dismayed when Jerry did not try to walk until he was 14 months old, while Patricia was running around the house at 10 months, time soon taught mother that Jerry also learned to walk, but at a slower pace. This is why so many parents relax more with their third child. By that time they have experienced the development rate of two different children and know that each one grows on his own schedule. With the third child, they generally stop worrying and enjoy him for himself.

Children in a child care center are at many different levels of development. Some are



The curious child likes to touch and feel as well as to look.

so advanced in coordination they can travel hand-over-hand across a horizontal bar, while others can barely manage to hang a moment from the bar. Some children chatter away in complete, clear sentences, while others mumble sounds that no one can understand, and still others say nothing at all. Slow speaking is not necessarily a sign of low intelligence. Many children are so shy on first coming to the center that they are unable to speak as they do at home. Once a child like this warms up, however, he may become the chatterbox of the group.

Children sometimes seem to grow by taking two steps forward and one step backward. A child who is adjusting to leaving his mother and spending a day in a center may be maturing socially. At the same time, he may move backward a step by reverting to wetting his pants or sucking his thumb.

Some teachers in child care centers have had experience teaching in public schools and expect young children to learn a new skill as quickly as a school-aged child does. They complain that the little ones must be shown over and over again how to do a puzzle or open a carton of milk. It is true that an older child may be able to handle an object like a can opener after being shown once, but the older child has had countless experiences with similar objects that a young child has not had.

Ability grows like a sand castle. Each new experience adds a shovelful of sand to the pile. The first skills learned become a foundation for learning new skills, just as the first shovelfuls of sand become packed down and firm to hold the weight of the additional sand on top. With some children, repeated practice is needed before they have a base for moving forward. Other children need only to do something once, and they can repeat the action without error.

A young child learns to do puzzles by first getting the feel of objects of different shapes, then gradually finding the single piece that matches a special hole, then finally fitting several different pieces together. An older child learns arithmetic the same way. First he learns to count, then gradually recognizes individual numbers, and eventually learns to do many puzzles with numbers.

The child care teacher cannot change a child's speed of learning. What she can do is realize that every child's rate of learning is different. She must remember that the advanced

Some bashful children hide behind their hands to shut out stares by others.

three-year-old, while able to perform many four-year-old skills, is still only three in emotional experience and must not be expected to act like a four-year-old all the time.

At the same time, she must understand that the slow developer may very well catch up when his nervous system is mature enough, if he has not been pushed and nagged at excessively by anxious parents or teachers. What the slow learner needs is patient support from a teacher who understands that all normal children learn at different speeds, but do have the capacity to learn.

Attitude toward the World—The seven dwarfs who looked after Snow White in the forest each had a different outlook on life that was reflected in their names. There was Doc, the leader of the group, who met the world with an attitude of "let's see what we can do about this;" Happy, who was pleased by everything that came his way; Grumpy, who thought that life and all it holds was unbearable; Sneezy, who was completely taken up with his own allergies; Bashful, who stayed in the background and was too shy to express an opinion; Sleepy, who could never stay awake long enough

to participate in any activity; and Dopey, who was always getting into situations over his head and having to be rescued by the other dwarfs.

This family of make-believe little men represents the same variation in attitudes toward the world that the children of a child care group do. There are young Docs, who will make the best of most situations. If they can't have the wheelbarrow, they'll make do with a wagon or some other substitute.

There are the Happys, who were probably easy-going babies with loving parents and have never had anything happen to destroy their trust in the world.

In the same group there may be a Grumpy or two, who is angry at the world and finds little pleasure in it. Children like this often develop deep feelings of anger because of harsh treatment at home. A Grumpy, when denied the wheelbarrow, will beat up the child who has it or stage a tantrum. Children have been known to become so angry that they will purposely hold their breath until they pass out or dig at their noses until they bleed as a way of getting revenge and attention at the same time.

The Sneezys of a child care center may be the vulnerable children, who must live with handicaps that sometimes prevent them from taking a full part in the day's activities.

Every group of children has a few Bashfuls and Sleepys. Both of these are children who withdraw from the action either because they are too overwhelmed by what is expected of them or can find little to interest them. However, a Bashful usually can be drawn into active participation with encouragement from his teacher. He does not really want to isolate himself, but cannot find enough self-confidence to join of his own will.

While few children actually fall asleep before naptime, some of them might as well be asleep for they seem completely apart from what is going on. These Sleepys may be so severely withdrawn that they need professional psychological help to bring them out of themselves.

The Dopeys of a child care center are the ones who meet the world's challenges without giving too much thought to the consequences. They are the ones who jump off swings in midair, get themselves and the floor soaked during water play, and manage to pull the room divider they are hiding behind over on themselves. Both the teacher and the other children must offer these Dopeys protection from themselves. Some children seem to act like Dopey when actually they haven't had the experiences they need to recognize what the consequences will be.

Coping Methods—When an infant is given a solid food that he does not like, he may react to it in several ways. One baby will shut his mouth tightly and pull his head away from the spoon. Another will close his mouth but not withdraw. Another may spit the unwanted food out and refuse to accept any more. Still another baby may cry and try to push the spoon away. If infants of only four to eight weeks old cope with an unpleasant situation in so many different ways, it is understandable that by the time children are two or three years old, they have had a lot of practice in handling conditions that make them uncomfortable. Each child has developed his own formula for coping when life seems to be getting ahead of him.

There are times in a child care center when excitement runs high, and everyone becomes somewhat overstimulated. A cautious child may sense that he is losing control and pull away from the activity, as if in self-defense. A more headstrong child may get himself more and more worked up until he dissolves into a storm of loud crying. If teacher can recognize the approach of these breaking points in each child and either change the situation or remove the children before they reach their limit, the children will not have to resort to desperate methods to cope with something that is too much for them.

Another form of coping is fantasy. A child who feels he cannot do what is expected of him may spend more and more time daydreaming. When his world of fantasy begins to occupy more time than the world of reality, the child is in danger of slipping away from reality altogether. Teachers can help such children by making their demands easier so that the child can experience success in the world of reality and does not need to escape.

"I might as well be talking to a wall," one teacher wailed in despair. She was talking about a child who seemed to hear only when she put her hands firmly on his shoulders and talked directly into his face. She eventually discovered that the child lived with almost constant hollering and swearing at home and through the years had coped by closing his ears to the offensive noise. This defense had become automatic, so that he could not hear any adult who spoke to him unless the adult first attracted his attention by some

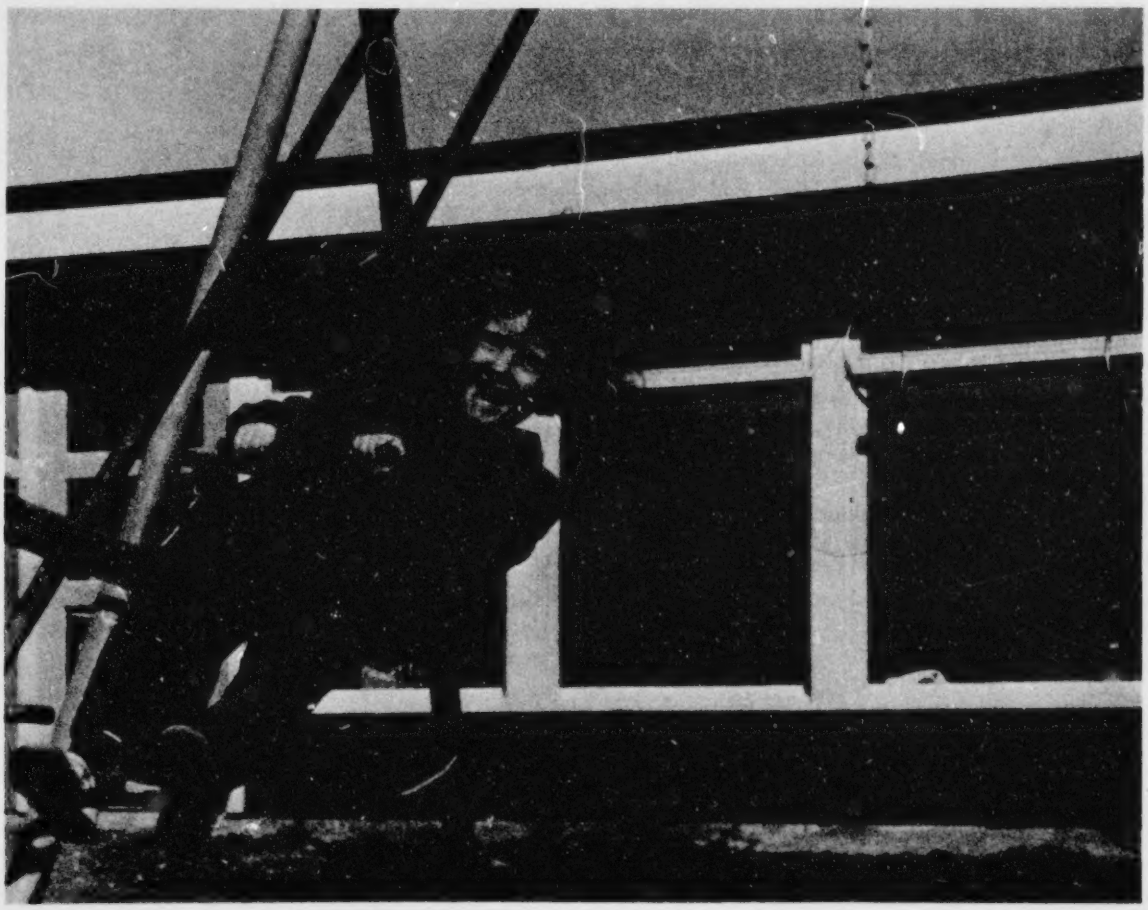
other means.

Differences in coping methods among children are especially noticeable in new situations or in times of stress. One child may remain solid like an oak in a hurricane—unbending and unbreaking, accepting the buffeting of life without complaint. Others may bend and sway like the slender birch, but come through the storm unharmed. Still others are like the shallow-rooted evergreen which is easily uprooted.

For the first month after entering a child care cente , Pecita was a spectator. She sat in the corner of the sandbox or at a table and just watched. By the end of the month, she began to imitate another child who was making a sand cake or to join in singing, but she never said a word nor played with any other child. Her only relationship was with the teacher and aide, who gave her affection when she seemed to want it.

Sometime during the second month, a child rolled off the sandbox seat onto the ground. This action seemed to release the spring that was holding Pecita in reserve so long. She mimicked the child with comic gestures and contagious giggling that made all the other children laugh. Soon several had joined her in the game of "rolling off the sandbox." The ice was broken.

After that her teacher noticed that Pecita, rather than being slow, was an extremely imaginative child. She was full of original ideas and used a variety of materials with confidence. Her weeks of watching were not wasted. While remaining on the sidelines, she was drinking in a storehouse of information that she was able to draw on later to make her experiences in the center more valuable. One reason she was able to benefit from her period of detachment was that her teacher had not pressed her to participate but continued to give her warmth and understanding while she sat aloof.



Swinging can bring great joy to a child who loves rhythmic movement.

what makes children different?

Heredity and Environment—When a new baby is born, a favorite topic among relatives is who the baby "takes after." The conversation is filled with remarks, such as, "He has his father's nose." "They certainly are his mother's dimples." "That determined chin is just like Aunt Bertha's." "Listen to him yell. He sure has inherited Cousin Harry's temper." The infant probably is yelling because, while he may resemble different members of the family, he is somebody in his own right—an individual who must be loved and respected for himself.

However, the relatives are not entirely wrong. Heredity does play a role. Brothers and sisters frequently resemble one another and may favor one parent over the other. Redheads come from families of redheads; tall, lanky boys often have tall, lanky fathers.

It sometimes seems as if temperaments are inherited as well, but here it is difficult to determine to what extent the child actually was born with certain personality traits or unconsciously copied them from a parent at an early age. The child of a quick-tempered parent may be quick-tempered himself because this is the type of response he has seen most often. Children of musical parents may show interest in playing a musical instrument, not just because they inherited unusual ability, but also because they were exposed to music from infancy.

A newborn baby comes into the world as a package of inherited characteristics. As he develops into childhood, then adulthood, everything around him has some effect on his growth. His environment in the early years is likely to have a lasting influence on the kind of adult he will be.

Prenatal and Postnatal Experiences—A Chinese baby is one year old on the day he is born. This peculiar way of measuring age recognizes that the baby has been a living being in his mother's womb for nearly a year. Our western method of counting age from the day of birth leads to the assumption that the child begins life when he reaches the outside world.

We now know that the environment in the womb seriously affects the child's development. Babies of drug addicts are addicts, themselves, at birth and must undergo the horrors of withdrawal within hours after leaving the womb. Babies whose mothers have German measles during the first three months of pregnancy are likely to be born with deformities or deafness. If the mother suffers from malnutrition during pregnancy, her baby will probably be frail and undernourished at birth. Even in identical twins, whose inherited characteristics are exactly the same, the baby who had the most room in the womb, may be larger at birth.

During birth other factors may have an effect on the baby. A slow, difficult delivery may cause oxygen to be cut off from the infant's brain, causing damage to the nervous system. After birth, lights, noises, temperatures, diet, the attitude of the mother, physical comfort—many, many things provide different kinds and amounts of stimulation and influence.

Extensive experiments have been conducted with laboratory animals to determine the effects of environment on intellectual and emotional behavior, as well as body size. The results indicate that everything that touches the baby animal has some effect on his development. While such controlled experiments cannot be carried out with human beings, there are sound reasons for believing that the human baby is just as susceptible to his surroundings as a guinea pig.*

Nutrition—Kids are getting bigger every year. Statistics prove that 20th century girls and boys are taller and heavier than their parents or grandparents were. This is not only true in America, but in every country where nutrition has improved in modern times.

This does not mean that a child's size is completely dependent on the food he eats. Children still inherit certain body builds that will make one large and another delicate, even on identical diets. Whatever their body build, however, children given adequate nutrition will grow

* Portions of this paragraph and subsequent ones under the heading "What Makes Children Different" have been taken from Rene Dubos' "Biological Individuality," which appeared in the Spring 1969 **Columbia Forum.**

taller and heavier than they would on a poor diet.

There is reason to think that the diet a child eats in his early life may determine his eating habits throughout his life. A person whose early diet was poor may continue to eat sparingly, even when he can afford to buy more and richer foods. On the other hand, many doctors believe that overzealous mothers may be responsible for fat children by forcing too much food on their babies.

Illness—When a child becomes ill, his growth may be slowed down while his body uses all of its strength to fight the illness and return him to good health. In a normally healthy child, once he recovers, his body goes on growing at its usual rate and there is no permanent disability.

However, a child who suffers repeated or chronic illness, like asthma or rheumatic fever, may be slow in developing both physically and emotionally. The chronically ill child is more dependent on mother and therefore may be reluctant to play freely with other children. When a child like this comes to a child care center, he may have a harder time leaving mother and feeling at ease with the group. If he is absent frequently because of his illness, he may have to go through a period of "warming up" every time he returns to the center.

The sickly child's personality may be a result of his illness. Hayfever or other allergies may make him uncomfortable and fretful. The child who tires easily may be angry at himself because he cannot keep up with the others.

Sometimes deep changes in personality occur in children who suffer a great deal, either from their own or their mother's illness, a death in the family, or some other disaster. The child care teacher must be aware when a child experiences some severe shock and must be prepared to help him over this painful period.

Memories of joyful occasions can give children and adults support through difficult times. Happy memories become a part of our lives. When the days are black with trouble, our memories tell us that there is happiness in the world, and it may come again to us if we remain strong.

For this reason, parents and teachers should plan happy events for children. Birthday parties, Hallowe'en costumes, Christmas celebrations, family picnics—events such as these are the stuff happy memories are made of. The adult who remembers happy times in his own childhood is more likely to go out of his way to arrange for happy occasions for his own children.

Relationship with the Family—Edmond is an only child and does not know how to share toys with the other children.

Mike is so jealous of his new baby sister, whom he knows he mustn't hurt, that he punches all the children at the center.

Ernestine's father is in jail, and she doesn't understand what he did wrong or how she should feel toward him.

Gregory's parents both work, but in the evenings they spend time playing and reading to him. He is a cooperative, helpful member of the group.

George's parents are divorced, and his mother entertains strange men at night, which seems to make George overly excited all the time.

Christine's mother is retarded and not capable of handling a bright three-year-old. Christine is confused about how she should behave with her mother. This makes it difficult for her to settle down at the child care center.

Maria's family recently came from Puerto Rico and she speaks only Spanish, which makes her shy about joining the other children.

Carlos' parents are migrant laborers, he moves so often he seems bewildered about what is expected of him.

A teacher who knows her children could go through the class and point out how each child is affected by his home life. She could do this whether her children came from comfortable middle-class homes or from dilapidated innercity tenements. Every child's home life is different. Nothing has so strong an influence on what the child will grow up to be as his early life at home with his family.

Do the parents have enough time for their children, or are they always away from home or too tired? Are they always honest with their children and with others? Do they show favoritism among the children? Do they mete out such harsh punishment that the children must resort to lying in self-defense? Are they so lax about rules that the children have no yardstick for measuring right and wrong behavior? Are the parents able to shoulder responsibility for the family? Are they outgoing, friendly people, or are they suspicious of their neighbors and have few friends?

All of these attitudes on the part of

parents help to fashion the child's personality. In farm areas, young boys often identify themselves more as males than in urban areas because they see more of their fathers during the day. The city boy, whose father works all day away from home, may see his father for only a short time in the evenings and on weekends. Many children in today's society have no father living at home—a situation that affects both boys and girls who may have no close relationship with a man.

Insecure children can feel safer when a trusted adult gives support.

When teacher has some understanding of the pressures a child is under at home, it gives her insight into the difficulties he must cope with that may prevent him from benefiting fully from his day care experiences. She may be able to help him over some of the rough spots. Most families provide a checkerboard of good influences and difficulties, and it is important to see the whole pattern.

Effects of Poverty—Dorothy M. and Dolly R. were both poor children. Both of them lived in ramshackled homes with several brothers and sisters and only a mother to support the family. Both families depended on welfare payments to survive. Yet Dorothy was happy and confident; Dolly was angry and insecure. What made two girls from similar homes so different?

A closer look inside the families reveals the difference. Dorothy's father had worked regularly and supported the family, not lavishly, but adequately, until he died in an automobile accident. With tiny children at home, Mrs. M. was unable to work and turned to welfare. She was forced to move into more modest quarters, and she reduced her living costs to match her new lower income. However, when the baby was old enough, Mrs. M. was able to place Dorothy and her younger brother in a child care center. She found employment and was able to give up welfare and make it on her own. During the dark days, she had confidence that their difficulties were temporary and life would eventually get easier. She spread this confidence to her children, while trying to give them the same secure family life they enjoyed while their father was alive.

Dolly's family had always been on welfare, and her grandparents as well. Her father, unskilled in a trade and unable to find a job that paid enough to keep his family, ran away. Mrs. R. had never known a better life and could not imagine that anything would ever change. She was trapped in the kind of poverty that breeds more poverty. Suffering from years of poor nutrition and lack of hope, Mrs. R. did not have the energy to make a comfortable home for her family. Even cleaning the house or washing clothes were tasks that required a strength she did not have. In such a depressed state, Mrs. R. could not offer her children confidence or security, for life to her was an endless struggle to keep alive.

The differences in these two poor families point to the fact that poverty by itself does

We need to be alert to children's cues that they are anxious: how does this little girl's face show her feelings?

not decide a child's personality so much as the kind of poverty he experiences. In fact, there are poor families in rural areas and small towns whose children do not consider themselves poor because most people they know live as they do. It is in large cities, where low-income neighborhoods are around the corner from prosperous ones, that children see what others have and how much they, themselves, lack.

Most important in determining how poverty will affect the children is the attitude of the parents. A hopeless mother may appear to have little love for her children. She may be too weary to prepare nutritious meals or take her children to a public clinic when they are sick. On the other hand, a strong and resourceful mother who is trying to improve the family's lot, will try to prepare wholesome meals on a tight budget and will take advantage of all the health and welfare services in the community to benefit her children.

Several different kinds of poverty have been identified. The poverty of Dorothy's family may be called traumatic poverty, which strikes suddenly because of illness or death of the head of the family. This type may be temporary until the family can take count of its resources and get back on its feet. Family members often pitch in to help, and the combined efforts may make the poverty short-lived.

Dolly's family suffered the poverty of the trapped, who through generations of poor education, discrimination, and malnutrition no longer have the will or the ability to get themselves out of poverty.

Other types of poverty include:

1. Temporary poverty of young people making their way in the world. Most couples start out intending to give their children the love and security they need. However, if a newly married couple becomes burdened too soon with too many babies, and the husband's salary has not increased in proportion to the greater demands at home, husband and wife may become discouraged and lapse into a disorganized home life. In such an atmosphere, their children's welfare may be overlooked.
2. Poverty of the vulnerable and the inadequate, the retarded, the emotionally ill. These are people who cannot seem to hold a job. They are out of step with the rest of the world and often take out their feelings of failure on their families. Children of such parents may be beaten and kicked at home. Every year thousands of children are seriously hurt by such parents. The parents may be so occupied with their own woes that they show their children too little love and too much neglect of physical and emotional needs.
3. Poverty of the creative nonconformist. These poor people purposely give up opportunities to earn more money so that they can live as they choose. The poor artist or poet or the young person living on a rural commune are living in poverty by choice. Such parents sometimes provide an unusually rich environment for their children.
4. Poverty of the underpaid, but good stable worker. People living in this kind of poverty carry their responsibilities as well as they are able, but are limited by lack of education or social discrimination to low-paying jobs. Children of such parents may receive good care, but there is seldom enough money to buy toys or other materials to

give the children varied experiences.

Freedom to Explore—Even when the family has a comfortable home, the children may be deprived of the opportunity to explore. Mothers wonder why small children find the items on the coffee table so much more fascinating than the objects in their toy boxes, and why a child who refuses to stay in his playpen for more than a few minutes can be occupied with the contents of a kitchen cupboard for an hour or so.

All normal children are born with a curiosity that should be satisfied if the child is going to learn very much about his world. Unfortunately, too many "no, no's" from disapproving adults may discourage curiosity to such an extent that the child slows down his rate of learning or stops learning entirely.

Whether a child has been allowed to explore and discover on his own or whether he has spent most of his early life in a crib or playpen will have some effect on how quickly he learns. Unfortunately, many homes that could offer a rich environment to explore are off limits to the child who touches everything, for fear he might break something. Instead of putting the breakable items away for a few months while the child's curiosity is at a peak, many mothers believe it is good discipline for a young child to learn early in life that there are things he may touch and things he must not touch. The months that should be full of new learning experiences as the toddler touches, smells, pokes, tastes, and reaches his way around the house are instead full of "no, no's" and frustration.

A teacher in a child care center can frequently pick out the children who were given freedom to explore and those who were restricted to what mother decided were acceptable toys. The explorers are more knowledgeable about the world and more eager to try new experiences. The children who were confined to narrow limits in their exploring often are reluctant to try new things and may lack a desire to learn.

how to reach each one

First Day Observations—The words of a popular song of several years ago went, "Getting to know you, getting to know all about you. Getting to like you, hoping that you like me." This might well be the theme song of a child care teacher on the day a new child comes to the center. She must get to know the child well before she can see that he gets the experiences he needs to develop fully.

Hopefully, one teacher will have only two or three new children at a time. If her group is made up of ten or more children coming to the center for the first time, it would be a good idea to stagger the days they begin so that she has time to get acquainted with a few at a time, and they have time to feel at home with her.

Although it takes weeks to know someone really well, the first day gives the teacher a few ideas of the types of personalities she will have to contend with. There will be explorers and watchers, leaders and followers, show-offs and bashful ones. Some will be babyish and cling to mother. Others, acting as if they had been going to school for years, will set out independently to look the place over. Some will keep all adults at arm's length, while others will seek the security of an adult lap. One or two will find a toy that appeals to them and play with it all day. Others will flit from one thing to another. Given the newness of the center and its furnishings, they will behave very much as the children did who found an unexpected pile of sand in their play yard.

On this first day teacher can make a few mental notes as to the children who appear to need immediate help in getting started and those who may need some direction later in settling down long enough to complete a project.

A Child's Eye View—

Mud is very nice to feel
All squishing out between the toes.
I'd rather squish around in mud
Than smell a yellow rose.
Nobody else but the rosebush knows
How nice mud feels between the toes.
Polly Chase Boyden

The author of this rhyme understood how enjoyable a mud puddle can be to a barefooted child. At the same time, she recognized that the child's mother probably would not be so appreciative of the qualities of mud, for the child in the poem says, "nobody else but the rosebush knows how nice mud feels between the toes."

Even at an early age children realize that what is pleasurable to them may be distasteful to adults. They even begin to feel guilty about squishing about in mud or rolling down a grassy

Vigorous running games are fun for most children.

A trusting child can give the teacher whole-hearted attention.

slope because mother does not like them to get dirty. Once we leave childhood, it is very difficult to return again in imagination and look at things through the eyes of a child. Poets are among the few people who can make the trip backward in time.

Though a teacher may not have the imagination of a poet, she can try to view the center as her children might. Each individual child has his own picture of the center. To one it may be a monster snatching him from his mother. To another, it may be a fun place where he is happy all day doing rewarding things. Another may view the center as an arena of exhausting competition where he always comes off second best. One child may find the center a peaceful place where he can find consistent support in the things he wants to do. Another child may find in the teacher the warm adult relationship he lacks at home.

If the teacher can get a glimpse of what the center means to each child, she will have a better idea how to reach him and his particular needs.

Individual Differences in Needs—The child who pictures the child care center as a monster trying to take him from his mother may not be ready for a full day away from home. It might be easier on child and teacher if he could come to the center for only half a day. Then, as he got used to the setting, he might be able to stretch the hours gradually until he is able to take a full eight hours away from mother.

Unfortunately, some children must stay the whole day whether they are ready for it or not because mother must work and there is no one at home to care for them. These children need some periods of quiet away from the group. Perhaps the teacher's aide could spend some time reading quietly to one or two who are not yet able to keep up with the others over a longer period. Or teacher may be able to arrange for one child to sit in the office with the secretary for half an hour's rest or spend a while chatting with the cook in the kitchen.

Some three-year-olds are not ready to leave mother, and even some four-year-olds need a lot of preparation ahead of time before they are willing to separate from her. If mother can sit in the center for a few days, gradually reducing the number of hours she is present, it is easier for her child. If mother cannot leave work long enough or if she is too shy to stay at the center, teacher or aide must fill the gap and give the frightened child comfort.

The child who finds joy in nearly every activity at the center can make all of a teacher's efforts worthwhile. Every teacher wants to think she has helped a child to learn. Children who find life rewarding are better learners than those who are preoccupied with sad or angry thoughts.

Teacher's first job is to help every child enjoy being at the center. She must move slowly, for some children resent being pushed into an unfamiliar situation. If Rita finally decides she would like to do what the other children are doing and make a butterfly, teacher is ready to show her how to cut out bits of colored paper and paste them to the wings of a paper butterfly. If Rita loses interest after pasting only three pieces, teacher may encourage her by saying, "Wouldn't you like to put on just a few more?" but she must be careful not to force the child to do something she does not want to do.

The consistent routine of a child care center frequently has a calming effect on the hyperactive child who cannot concentrate on anything for very long. After a few weeks or months of regular meals, good food, guided work and play, the Dopeys and Grumpys of the class may turn into sensible Docs or easy-going Happys.

Again, teacher must find out what each child needs to make his day fulfilling.

Susan is not able to finish a full lunch, but she needs frequent snacks. Teacher is ready with a graham cracker when Susan runs out of energy.

Ronnie plays so hard and gets so tired some days that he falls asleep at the lunch table. Teacher sees that Ronnie is served first and scooted off to bed when his head begins to droop.

Lisa gets herself worked up to a crying spell when she plays too hard. Teacher calls her aside for a quiet talk when she thinks Lisa has had enough.

Mike becomes so absorbed in playing that he forgets to go to the bathroom. Teacher remembers for him and matter-of-factly leads him off to the toilet every so often.

By recognizing individual needs and trying to fulfill them, teacher helps make the center a happy place for each child.

The child who views the center as an arena of exhausting competition needs teacher to help him succeed. If Joanie is frustrated all the time because she can't keep up with the others,

she may lose interest and drop out. If everyone is cutting pictures out of magazines, and Joanie doesn't know how to hold the scissors, she may try to get out of the situation by falling off her chair or grabbing someone else's magazine. Creating a disturbance may be her method of coping with a situation she feels is beyond her. Joanie needs special help from teacher so she won't feel second best in the group. If she continues to lag behind the others in many activities, she might respond better in a group of younger children where there is less pressure.

If Rosita is poorly coordinated and cannot hold onto a ball, teacher can plan group games using a large ball or she can play ball alone with Rosita to help her improve her coordination.

Marvin spends most of his time attacking the other children to prove his worth. He wants to be accepted as a leader, but he doesn't know any other way to go about it. Teacher gives him opportunities for leadership by suggesting that he demonstrate how to climb a tree or be "It" in a game. When Marvin realizes he can succeed in acceptable activities, he doesn't need to fight so much.

The child who finds the center a peaceful place where he can find consistent support may come from a topsy-turvy home where he is never able to sit down and work out a project. In addition to a lack of materials, his home may be so crowded that there is no quiet place for him to go. At the center he is able to give form to his ideas with Lego or building blocks for he knows that teacher will support his efforts by keeping other children from disturbing him.

Some children seem to have a secret lock that keeps them in reserve until someone finds the right key. Jennifer came to the center every day but never became involved with the group. She spent more time watching what the others did than doing anything herself. One day one of the mothers volunteered to dance for the children. After her performance, she asked the children to dance by pretending they were different things, first butterflies, then clouds, then storm winds and so on. She played appropriate music for each interpretation.

Jennifer surprised everyone by being the first to run into the center of the room. She gave a graceful imitation of a butterfly. With each new dance she became more absorbed in her own movements and less aware of the other children around her. For Jennifer, dancing was the secret key that unlocked her personality. Teacher remembered this and made dancing a frequent activity.

The child who finds a warm relationship with his teacher feels secure at the center and is ready to benefit from his experiences there. While every child needs to trust his teacher, the child who has understanding adults at home is not quite so dependent on her. Most children who enjoy a close relationship with an adult at home come to the center ready to use the materials and learn. They have had experience in talking with adults and doing things with them. Used to being accepted, they take for granted that teacher will accept them as their parents have. These children may not need a warming up period, but may plunge right into the center's activities with little help from teacher.

Other children, however, may come from homes where the adults barely speak to them and never play with them. The child may experience things at home that frighten or overexcite or confuse him. He may have learned at home that adults can be cruel to children, so in self-defense he keeps away from adults as much as possible. When a child like this comes to a child care center he naturally distrusts his teacher. He doesn't understand what she expects of him, and his experiences at home do not guide him. He may withdraw into a speechless, motionless creature, or he may take the opposite course and tear wildly about, knocking over anyone who happens to get in his way.

A teacher in child care centers in very poor neighborhoods can expect one or two children like this. It is a temptation for her to concentrate on the well-adjusted children who are making progress and ignore the withdrawn child and brand the active ones as behavior problems. However, teacher's extra effort to develop a warm relationship with these children may transform them into alert, cooperative members of the group. If the center can become an important part in the child's life, it can offset some of the disturbing experiences he has at home.

An ideal teacher knows her children well, she understands their physical, intellectual, and emotional needs. She knows how each child learns best, whether by seeing, listening, touching, or doing. She becomes aware of what each child expects from her and how he or she pictures the center. She learns which children require lots of space and vigorous physical activities and which

ones prefer to sit quietly and work with their hands. She is acquainted with each child's attention span and how fast he grasps a new idea. She knows what hurts each child's feelings, what threatens each one, what turns a child on and off. She knows which ones are unsure of themselves and need praise and which ones become so satisfied with themselves that they need an occasional prod to keep them progressing. The rare teacher who can treat each child according to his own needs is making her children's stay in the child care center a valuable part of their lives.

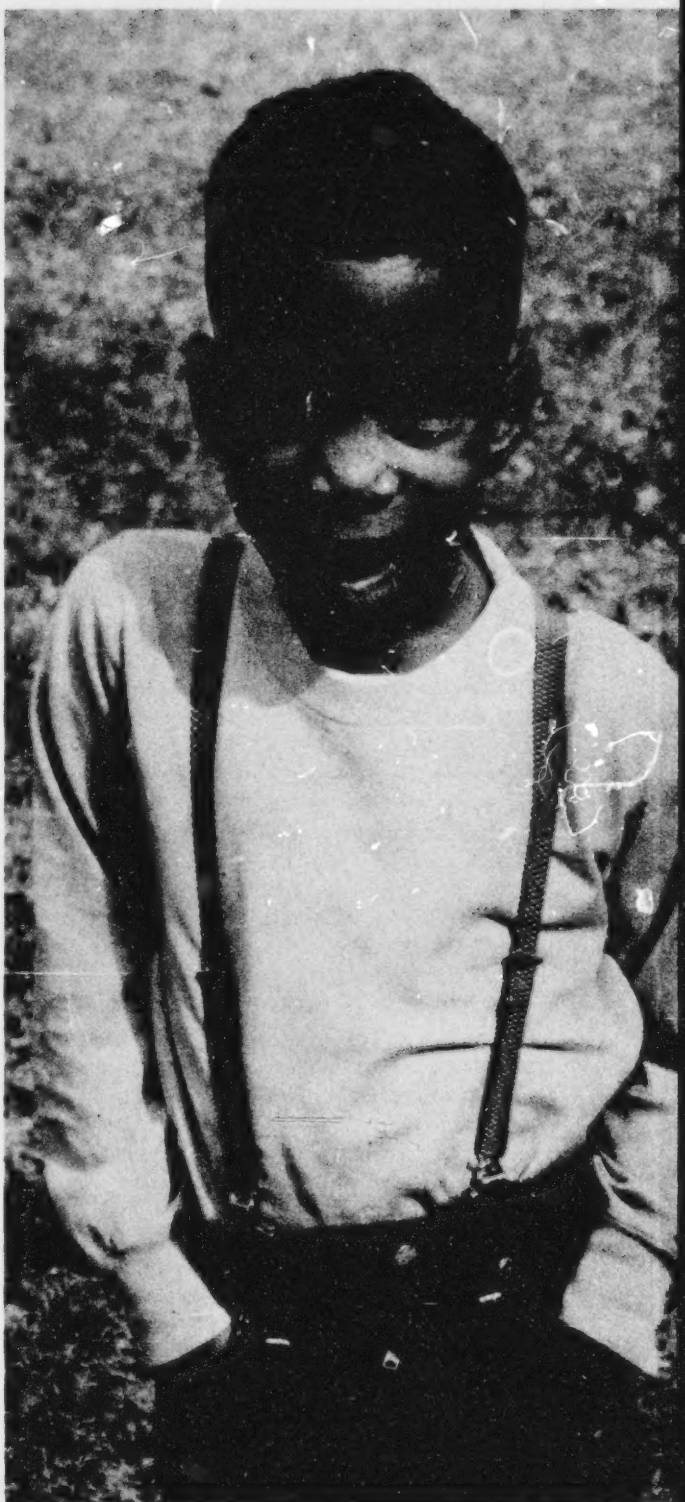
Building Individual Images—The child care center can help a child in another important need in addition to those already discussed. It can help him build a self-image that he is proud of. Everyone, adults and children alike, has a mental picture of himself. This self-image includes much more than actual appearance, although that is a part of it. It includes personality, abilities, morals— in short, everything that makes a person what he is.

This self-image makes a difference in what we are like. We must be pleased with ourselves, before we are pleasing to others. We must have confidence in ourselves in order to do a good job. The failures of the world think of themselves as failures, just as the world's successful people view themselves as successes.

Every child has an image of himself. If he has always been accepted by others and has enjoyed a fair amount of success, chances are he will usually think of himself in a favorable light and will continue to perform competently. If he has been told he cannot do anything well or if he has been rejected by the adults around him, he develops a poor picture of himself. Unless something happens to change this negative self-image, he will carry inside a feeling he will probably fail in school and in most of life's challenges.

People can change into the image they have of themselves. Although President Theodore Roosevelt was a puny, sickly boy, he saw himself as a robust sportsman. Throughout his boyhood he worked hard to develop his muscles and eventually overcame his childhood weaknesses. In his adult years he became a successful soldier and a big game hunter, both occupations requiring physical fitness.

The opposite is also true. A person who thinks of himself as worthless often ends up doing nothing that has meaning to others or to himself. A person who thinks himself ugly may see only



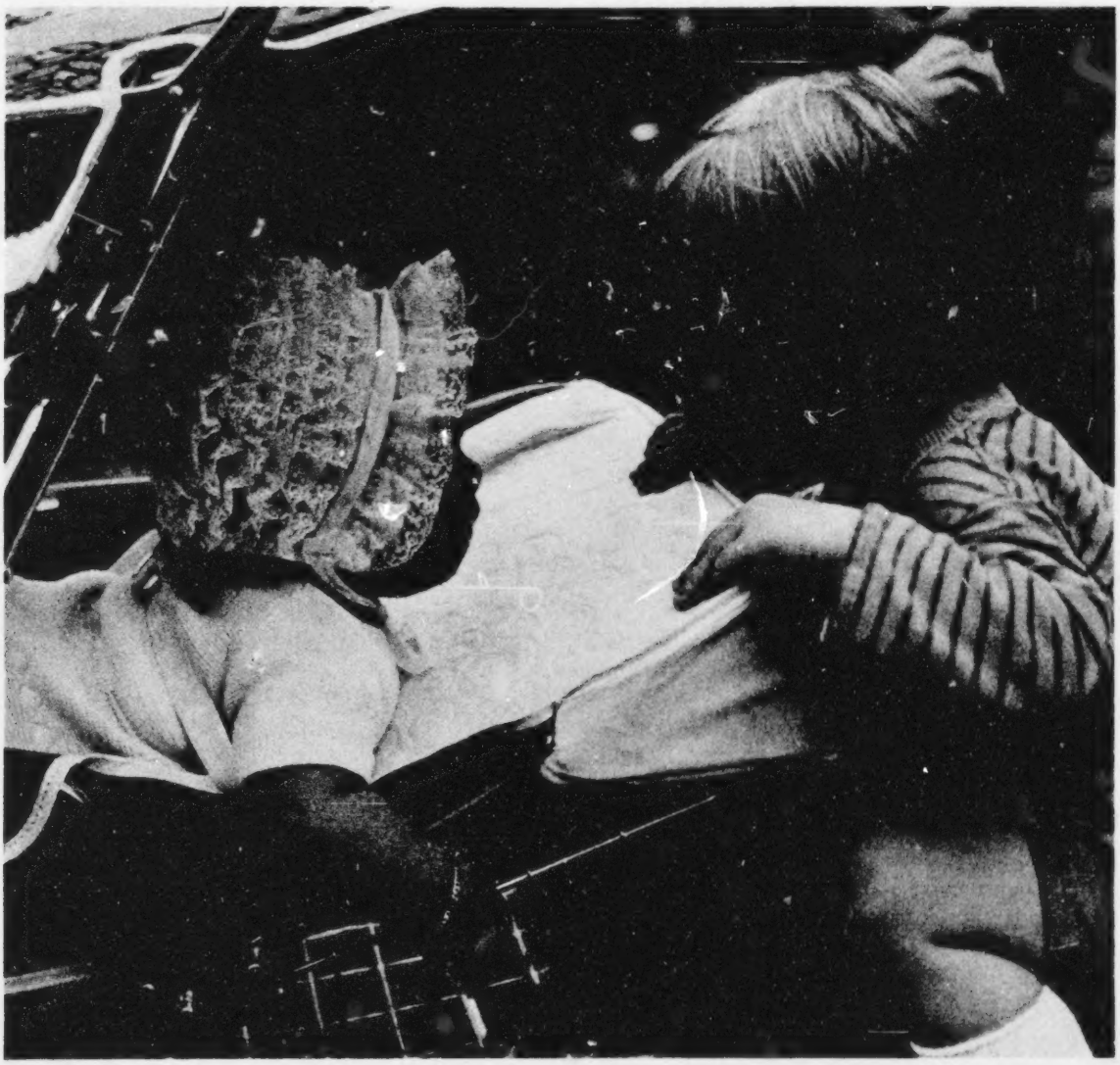
A child full of wonder/warm gay child.

the ugliness in others.

It is during the early years that a child develops a self-image that will either motivate him to learn and succeed, or will perhaps chain him to a life of failure. The child center can certainly help build good self-images.

In helping a child develop his own self-image, a teacher must guard against being influenced too much by her own self. It is human nature to judge other people by the things we dislike about ourselves. If, as a child, a teacher were punished for getting dirty and finally, with great difficulty, had repressed the desire to do so, she may dislike the messy children in her class. A teacher who, as a child, wanted to hurt her baby sister then felt guilty about it, may be infuriated by a child who hurts another child. She may unconsciously resent a shy child, or a bold one, or a plain child, or one who stutters because at some time in the past she rejected these characteristics in herself.

If a teacher is going to succeed in helping children believe in themselves, she must accept them and believe in their potentialities first. Many great men, including Abraham Lincoln, have given credit to their mothers who had faith in their abilities and encouraged them to develop them.



The story of the ugly duckling is a story of self-image. When the baby swan was among the ducks, who thought he was ugly and pecked at him, he believed them and despised himself. When he finally joined a flock of swans, he was surprised how warmly they received him for he had expected them to peck at him and drive him away as the ducks had done. Finally on looking at his reflection in the water, he realized that he had turned into a beautiful swan himself.

Children who feel they may be rejected by their teacher may misbehave and in other ways make themselves ugly. When they discover their teacher likes them, they can turn into delightful boys and girls.

the individual child as part of a group

Groups Are Different Too—Even though groups are made up of many different individual children, after a while they take on personalities of their own. Just like individuals they develop reputations. Mrs. Johnson's group may be known as the roughnecks of the center; Miss Turner's group is known to play well together; Miss Ford's group is the noisiest in the center, and Mrs. White's group loses control easily.

Each of the four groups probably is composed of similar children—a few Dopeys, a few Grumpys, a Sneezy, a couple of Bashfuls and Sleepys, several Happys, and a handful of Docs. Yet, in one group the combination blends together into a cooperative unit; in another group it boils up into frequent explosions. Why?

Every group has unappointed leaders who set the pace of the others. If the leaders of one group are noisy and excitable, they may infect the others so that the entire group gets wild. On the other hand, if the leaders enjoy and can use free play, the other children are likely to follow their lead.

The teacher also plays a role in the personality of the group. If she is excitable and loud, the children may be agitated and quarrelsome. If the teacher goes to pieces when things get confused, the children will have nothing firm to guide them and may become unruly. When teacher is calm and reasonable, the children learn that there are grownups they can depend on when they need help. New situations are not so frightening.

When teacher knows her group, she will know how to plan her day. Mrs. White, whose group loses control easily, needs to plan activities to keep her children occupied. Miss Turner, on the other hand, may take advantage of her group's ability to play peacefully together and give them more time for free play. Mrs. Johnson may find it useful to introduce strenuous games and races to give her roughnecks a workout, while Miss Ford's noisemakers may benefit from some quiet songs or water play.

When a few children constantly disrupt the others, it may be necessary to let the teacher or aide take these children into another room where the noise and activities of the larger room do not reach them. In a quieter atmosphere these children may learn to keep busy in satisfying ways that do not upset others. However, when one disturbed child continually annoys the others and interferes with their learning, it may be time to call on professional psychological advice. The teacher cannot become so absorbed as well as disturbed with one child that she neglects the other children in the classroom.

The cultural background of the children creates special group needs as well. If a frequent dinner for the children is hamburgers or hot dogs, potato chips, and soda, they will need vegetables, fruits, and milk at the center to round out their diets. Another group of children may be fed mostly fried cornmeal mush at home. They will need a complete diet of meat, vegetables, fruit, and milk to supplement it. Each center must know the eating habits of the families it serves and plan its menus to fill any nutritional gaps.

Each Child Can Enrich the Group—"Let's all of us make up a story," said teacher. "We'll start with William. He has such good ideas."

William shut his eyes and thought for a moment, then he opened them wide and giggled, "I just saw an Easter bunny with one pink ear and one blue ear and a yellow tail, and he was trying to cross the street, but there were too many cars coming, and he was afraid."

After William's vivid beginning, the rest

of the children were able to direct their imaginations toward getting the colorful bunny across the busy street. Together they made up their own story which teacher wrote down and hung on the bulletin board.

Jenny is not so quick at thinking up stories, but she is good at making up games to play with dolls and dress-up clothes. Whenever there are a few children in the housekeeping corner, she assigns each of them a role in the family and gives them a chore to do.

Pedro is always the first one to start putting toys away when teacher says it is time to clean up. His example often helps get the other children started.

Martha likes to look after newcomers to the group and make them feel at ease. Matthew loves animals and never lets the group forget to feed the fish. Andy has big ideas for highways and bridges which the boys make in the sand. Debra has a feeling for colors and shapes. The other children sometimes copy her art projects.

Children learn quickly from other children—often to the despair of their parents and teachers. While the boys in the sand box may learn how to build a highway from Andy, they may also copy Jim when he throws sand. Each child brings to the group his own interests and abilities. Often children misbehave because there is nothing that appeals to their interests and no one cares about their abilities. Many discipline problems in school arise from the expectation that each child will conform to a fixed mold. When the children who do not fit the common mold realize they are not being accepted for themselves, they often rebel by creating disturbances in the classroom or by dropping out of school.

If in the early years in the child care center the teacher can discover what each child enjoys doing and what each child can do with satisfaction, she can encourage each child to express himself. By creating situations in which each child can find a bit of success, she provides opportunities for each child to make a worthwhile contribution to the group. Perhaps if Jim is assured his sand highways are good, he will not feel the need to throw sand.

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